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Note by the President of the Security Council

Following the discussion in the Security Council on the agenda item entitled "Africa's food crisis as a threat to peace and security", held at the 4652nd meeting of the Council, on 3 December 2002, the attached paper, containing responses to questions posed at the meeting to Mr. James Morris, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, is hereby circulated for the attention of the members of the Council.

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Annex

Responses to questions addressed to Mr. James Morris, Executive Director of the World Food Programme, by members of the Security Council at the 4652nd meeting of the Council, on 3 December 2002, on the item entitled "Africa's food crisis as a threat to peace and security"

QUESTIONS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

1. We would like to ask whether WFP is confident that those who need food aid in Africa are receiving it, and whether WFP is satisfied that it has sufficient mechanisms for monitoring this.

Answer: There are two potential obstacles to ensuring that food aid reaches those who are in need in the current crises: 1) political manipulation of food assistance, and 2) a lack of resources.

WFP works in many harsh and politically charged environments where food must be carefully monitored to avoid its misuse. Political interference in the distribution of WFP food aid is absolutely intolerable, a point which WFP does not hesitate to discuss openly with recipient governments. It is crucial that WFP is allowed to target beneficiaries using established vulnerability criteria and not be influenced by political concerns, and in places where that is not possible, WFP will suspend its operations. Recently, WFP temporarily suspended distributions in two localities in Zimbabwe until it was assured there was no political interference. In most cases, however, WFP food assistance comprises only a portion of food aid being distributed. In these circumstances, WFP is unable to guarantee that political misuses do not occur with those food aid resources.

In southern Africa as elsewhere in Africa, WFP relies on a strong field presence for monitoring distributions in order to ensure they are not politically influenced, and that our food reaches those that need it the most. We regularly verify beneficiary figures from monthly-consolidated output reports and review them against target figures - maps and charts. In Zimbabwe for example, at the community level, 42 field monitors in over 40 districts support the efforts of our NGO partners distributing food locally and their field staff in order to monitor that those most in need are actually the ones receiving WFP food aid.

This same monitoring system assists WFP in its effort to ensure that the most vulnerable people are targeted with food aid when a shortage of resources forces a scaling down of programs. WFP dedicates much time and energy in strengthening vulnerability analysis and methodologies, defining prioritisation strategies and beneficiary selection criteria that help us reach the populations most at risk. In southern Africa for example, geographical prioritization exercises to identify 'hotspot areas' (coinciding presence of several vulnerability indicators such as food security, nutrition, HIV prevalence) are used to concentrate aid in the most vulnerable areas in a given country. At the community level, registration exercises are undertaken with guidance using agreed criteria as well as with

participation from local stakeholders. Beneficiaries are identified as per their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Those most in need as per the vulnerability criteria have priority in the registration exercise.

2. How is WFP coordinating with other agencies to ensure that any potential for conflict in the areas in which WFP are working is minimized? We would be interested in your comments on coordination between WFP and the DPKO, for example, in dealing with food insecurity in conflict situation and the handling of food aid in those areas.

Answer: As a member of the United Nations, WFP is mandated to ensure coordination with its sister agencies to avoid potential conflict or duplication. In Southern Africa for example, a Regional Inter-Agency Coordination and Support Office (RIACSO) has been established within the WFP Regional Bureau Office. At its head is the Regional Coordinator for the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, who also serves as WFP's Regional Director, ensuring that coordinated support is provided to the different UN agencies represented at the regional level as well as to Country Teams. Support is provided at this level for strategic and contingency planning, assessment, monitoring and situation analysis.

RIACSO is expected to grow from its present composition (OCHA, UNDP, FAO, IFRC, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, WFP) and include other agencies and organizations such as IFAD and ILO, as well as a reinforced presence by those already in situ. RIACSO is at present building a network of communication at the regional level between the UN agencies and the key NGO partners and donors to avoid duplication and strengthen impact.

Throughout Africa, inter-agency and regional information sharing is also facilitated through the establishment of various mechanisms by OCHA for both UN and non-UN information sources. Possible areas of overlap and gaps in coverage are also identified through the review and consolidation of programmes and projects within the framework of the UN Consolidated Appeals.

In the last several years, WFP and DPKO have increasingly developed their cooperation and coordination. In particular, WFP and DPKO are coordinating and collaborating on logistic matters, such as air operations to maximise both efficiency and safety, sea and land transport in countries where DPKO has a presence. DPKO may also participate actively in the United Nations Joint Logistic Center (UNJLC) for which WFP is the custodian for the UN system. Increasingly, WFP and DPKO are sharing information relating to preparedness, for instance, in relation to potential crisis situations. WFP and DPKO are co-located in Brindisi and coordinate on response activities launched from there.

At the field level, WFP often works side by side with UN missions and DPKO implementing its humanitarian mandate and assisting millions of war affected civilians caught in conflict situations. When required, and when the conditions permit, WFP supports war to peace transitions for instance by ensuring the provision of food aid to

demilitarized soldiers and their dependents, as well as vulnerable groups and child soldiers, in the context of UN supported Demobilization and Reintegration exercises. In the context of start-up phase of quartering process, when military personnel have not yet been disarmed (and therefore where WFP cannot consider the provision of food assistance to armed military personnel), WFP normally will coordinate with DPKO to establish plans for the provision of food requirements through alternative means and resources. However, once disarmament has taken place in the framework of a well designed plan for demobilization, and where there is a DPKO mission on the ground, WFP can be an active partner in the provision of food assistance for DDR. DPKO and WFP also would, in this case, cooperate and coordinate on security and logistic matters, this including the organization of humanitarian convoys and escorts.

WFP presence in conflict areas is regulated by UNSECOORD. DPKO may, in exceptional circumstances and if so allowed by the mandates of the Security Council on a given situation and if the mission has the means to do so, transport and deliver WFP food aid commodities to areas of high insecurity where WFP personnel is forbidden to go due to UNSECOORD decisions. Other areas of collaboration between WFP and DPKO are in the areas of training and mine action.

3. The situation in Southern Africa is clearly very grave. We would be interested in the views of WFP on the extent to which this crisis is caused by drought and the extent to which it is worsened by government policy. Mr. Morris made reference to the role that economic policy can play in this area, and government decisions. I have Zimbabwe particularly in mind in this context.

Answer: Although the reduction in crop harvests in the Southern Africa region can be partially attributed to erratic rainfall and drought-like conditions, the principal factors underlying the crisis include a volatile mix of ineffective food security and governance policies, the depletion of strategic grain reserves, disruptions to commercial farming, poor economic performance, foreign exchange shortages and delays in the timely importation of maize.

In Zimbabwe, the land reform policy disrupted agricultural activities and has led to the collapse of the commercial food sector. Commercial cereal production declined by 61% from an already poor harvest of 2001. Unlike the 1992 drought, the water table did not decline during the 2001/2 agricultural years, which would have allowed the large-scale commercial sector to irrigate and reduce the decline in cereal yields. Government policies restricting private sector commercial imports (which at present accounts for only 2% of commercial imports) and controlling the pricing of cereals have also contributed to the food deficit in Zimbabwe.

Greater private sector participation in the market (in particular in the food imports sector), is essential for the improvement of the overall food supply in the short, medium and longer term. At the same time, it is important to promote more effective food security policy frameworks in Africa to mitigate the effects of disasters and promote longer term development objectives.

QUESTIONS FROM MAURITIUS

1. As a SADC member, Mauritius is extremely concerned about the alarming humanitarian situation in our region. According to recent press releases, the humanitarian relief effort in southern Africa is falling short by 400,000 tons of food, and even the next season will not enable farmers to produce enough food to support the population with the intensification of El Nino. There is a likelihood that crop production could drop even lower, thus necessitating food relief efforts to stretch beyond 2003. And it is alarming to note that the number of people of SADC countries that will continue to suffer from food crisis until next year is now estimated at close to 15 million. We would like to hear the strategy that WFP is adopting for its operations and resource needs to face this grave situation.

Answer: As of 17 December 2002 the Southern Africa Emergency Operation was 61.5% funded for the period July 2002- March 2003, with a shortfall of approximately US$ 195 million. Despite the shortfall, WFP continues to feed as many people as possible. Unfortunately, however, the effectiveness of food aid in facilitating the recovery of the region has been damaged by an even lower level of support provided by donors for other lifeline sectors such as health, nutrition, and agriculture. Only about 20% of the necessary resources for these non-food sector programs have been committed thus far.

The SADC Vulnerability Assessment Committee (VAC) assessment completed in September 2002 indeed revealed that the situation is growing worse. Dry spells and drought, crop failures, depletion of strategic grain and household reserves, disruptions to commercial farming, and poor economic performance throughout the region, as well as the compounded effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in this region, have all combined to threaten an estimated 14.4 million people. This means that the population in need of assistance has so far increased by 1.6 million compared to the 12.8 million people in need that was estimated by the May FAO/WFP Crop and Food Supply Assessment Mission.

Because of funding shortfalls, WFP and other agencies are moving to set priorities based on the assessment findings which have identified 'hot spots' of vulnerability (including HIV/AIDS prevalence). WFP and its partners will target food and other resources to those areas and those beneficiaries that are most vulnerable. At the same time, based on the results of a new assessment has just been completed (the results of which will be available in early January), WFP will make careful projections to ensure continuity in food resourcing and to avoid a food pipeline break.

Very preliminary information from the latest assessments continues to indicate that the situation is grave with a poor harvest expected in April/May. Furthermore, even if the weather patterns improve and the political situation stabilizes, HIV/AIDS has driven the people in need to the limits of survival. This is likely to remain an emergency threat in the future, which will require substantial assistance for several years to come.

WFP's intervention in Southern Africa after the March period will address these realities and adapt itself to the changing circumstances on the ground. Care will be taken not to distribute too much food during the harvest period, so as not to disrupt local market mechanisms and agricultural and labour incentives while ensuring that the most vulnerable populations continue receiving the necessary food aid. Safety net programmes such as School Feeding, nutrition rehabilitation, HIV care and support, orphans support, and Mother and Child Health care will become of great importance in providing assistance to individuals who cannot benefit from the newly available food sources. Simultaneously, some general food distributions may be maintained to reach the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as the elderly, the chronically ill, child-headed households, and so on.

2. We also have a second concern within the region about the status of the genetically modified (GM) food that is currently being sent to some countries of the SADC region. We all know that donations of food to WFP include those containing GM products, and some countries are quite legitimately concerned about the potential risk to biological diversity of their maize varieties. As we all know, they have expressed reservations on receiving such food products. In some of the SADC countries, the milling processes of GM products, especially whole grain maize kernels, is being undertaken by some of them, but not all of them have the capacity to do so. We understand that the UN agencies involved in the humanitarian operations are planning to establish a policy for food aid involving GM products or food derived from biotechnology. We would like to get more information about the safety of such products and how much research has been carried out to ensure that these do not have only long-term effects on the health of the population but also that they do not have an effect on the environment where these products are likely to be used.

Answer: The WFP policy that has been in effect with regard to all donations of foods can be summarized as follows:

- WFP distributes only foods that fully meet the food safety standards of both donor and recipient countries and that they both deem safe for human consumption. This applies to both in-kind and purchased food donations.

- WFP food aid shipments adhere to the food safety guidelines and recommendations of the Codex Alimentarius Commission, jointly signed by FAO and WHO.

- The Programme essentially acts as a broker in food aid shipments, and the policies of the governments involved prevail. In order to function, WFP must operate on the assumption that governments exercise due diligence in setting their national regulations with regard to exports and imports of food.

With regard to the safety of GM food, WFP has never received any report of ill health effects or allergic reactions to any GM foods it has provided. WFP is unaware of any documented ill effects, including allergic reactions, to GM foods anywhere in the world.

A UN policy on GM food aid has already been developed with specific reference to southern Africa. WFP, along with FAO and WHO, issued a joint statement that indicated clearly that, based on all scientific evidence available to date and national information, GM/biotech foods now marketed present no known risk to human health. The Statement also endorsed the basic principle in WFP's existing policy, that the acceptance or rejection of any such food donations is the prerogative of the recipient Government.

With regard to environmental issues, the statement noted that recipient governments can opt to process GM commodities, which satisfactorily deals with the issue of accidental introduction of these crops. WFP is assisting southern African countries receiving GM maize with milling when so requested.

On questions related to research on GM food products, we would refer the Security Council members to two lectures on GM food recently given in the Secretary-General's lecture series. The WFP New York Liaison Office is forwarding copies to the offices of all Security Council members for their information.

QUESTIONS FROM SINGAPORE AND IRELAND

1. It is obvious that food insecurity has many causes, some of which are beyond our control. Mr. Morris explained how adverse climatic conditions are out of control, and certainly sometimes national governments do not have control over their economic, agricultural and public policies. In relation to this issue, one question is that, working within the context of WFP's dual mandate, i.e. development and dealing with emergencies, would it be possible for WFP to develop programmes in Africa that are self-sustainable and would be able to reduce or eliminate the number of chronic emergencies? **(SINGAPORE)**

2. In terms of the challenge facing governments and the private sector in Africa, the NEPAD document says clearly that agrarian system biases in economic policy are factors affecting food insecurity, as well as drought and instability in world commodity prices. We would be grateful for an assessment, however brief, of what can be done by governments and by the private sector in terms of, for example, provision of irrigation equipment, development of arable land, to address the food insecurity situation. This also links in with the question of government policy that has been raised earlier -- the strong theme that comes across in NEPAD of the importance of developing community leadership and government policies to support that. That was also a theme that came across recently in the International Food Policy Research programme that emphasized that the role of small farmers is probably the single most important dimension in addressing food insecurity problem in Africa. **(IRELAND)**

3. The recent report by the UN Institute for Natural Resources very strongly said that low soil fertility and degradation of land in Africa -- 72% in sub-Saharan Africa for crop land degradation and 32% for pasture land – remains a serious problem. Those figures

suggest that there is a real need for very long-term support by WFP, FAO, and the international community generally in tackling soil degradation and strengthening soil fertility. What is your response to this need? **(IRELAND)**

Answer: Agriculture and rural development must play a central role in strategies to reduce hunger and poverty and make rural households more resilient in the face of natural disasters. Agriculture is a source of food but agriculture and rural off-farm activities also provide employment and income for the rural poor. The income from agricultural growth creates demand for goods and services, creating a cycle in which agriculture and rural off-farm income increase while sustaining each other's growth. Improvements in the conditions of small-scale farmers are especially important since, paradoxically, they produce much of the food while also accounting for a high proportion of the poor and hungry.

Growth in agriculture and rural off-farm activities creates opportunities for the poor to raise their incomes. Yet, the extent to which they are able to take advantage of these opportunities depends on whether they are well nourished, in good health and literate. Improvements in nutrition are a prerequisite for the poor to take full advantage of the opportunities created by development.

WFP and FAO have agreed that the best way to tackle long-term food insecurity is through a twin-track approach. One track is dedicated to creating opportunities for the hungry to improve their livelihoods by promoting development, particularly agricultural and rural development, through policy reform and investments in agriculture. The other track involves direct measures to fight hunger through programmes to enhance immediate access to food by the hungry, thereby increasing their productive potential and allowing them to take advantage of the opportunities offered by development.

The Rome-based agencies believe that implementing such a twin-track strategy offers the best hope of reducing long-term vulnerabilities to food insecurity that, if unresolved, can exacerbate the severity of food emergencies. It is important to note, however, that the immediate causes of most food emergencies – conflict, drought, and sudden natural development – cannot be prevented solely by development activities. Thus, even if the twin-track strategy were fully and effectively implemented, poor countries would still occasionally face humanitarian emergencies where food aid is required.

The twin track approach calls for investments in five areas, four of which relate to agricultural and rural development. The five areas are as follows:

1. *Improve agricultural productivity and enhance livelihoods and food security in poor rural communities*. Such a process requires an initial injection of capital, either through loans or matching grants, to enable farmers to kick-start a sustainable process of on-farm innovations.

2. *Develop and conserve natural resources.* Investments need to focus on managing the resource base, improving technical production efficiency (yields) and developing practices that foster sustainable and intensified food production.

3. *Expand rural infrastructure.* This includes priority for rural roads and basic infrastructure to stimulate private sector investment in food marketing, storage and processing, as well as increased market access.

4. *Strengthen capacity for knowledge generation and dissemination.* This requires the provision of effective knowledge-generation and dissemination systems, aiming to strengthen links among farmers, agricultural educators, researchers and extension workers. National agricultural research systems also need to increase their capacity to respond to the technology needs of small-scale farmers.

5. *Ensure access to food for the most needy through safety nets and other direct assistance.* Targeted feeding programmes include school meals, feeding of expectant and nursing mothers as well as children under five through primary health centers, soup kitchens and feeding programmes directed at the most destitute. WFP food aid programs primarily support this element of the twin-track strategy. Another essential part of such intervention, particularly after a major emergency, is ensuring the availability of seeds, tools and other inputs to small farmers. These are programs primarily supported by FAO or other agencies and NGOs.

The investments proposed above will only have the intended impact if appropriate policies are in place to ensure the maximum impact of public resources. In particular, an enabling policy environment will assist in attracting private investments needed to complement public investment flows.

QUESTION FROM SINGAPORE

On a second general point, Mr. Morris spoke about the increased demands on WFP within the eight months that he has taken over as Executive Director, but our research has already shown that there appears to be a paradox between the abundant food surpluses today and the fact that more people are starving today than ever before. Would Mr. Morris agree that such a paradox does exist, and if so, could he comment on the possible causes for this paradox? Finally, does Mr. Morris have any suggestions on how to turn the situation around?

Answer: Global food production has been sufficient to feed every man, woman and child since the 1960s. The largest per capita increases in food production have come in the more densely populated areas of the world, in particular China, India and the rest of Asia. The hunger problem we continue to have is not a food production issue. Poverty is the main cause of food insecurity, as poor people frequently cannot afford to buy all the food they need or have access to land to produce it. The demand for food will increase

by 30% to 50 % over the next 15 to 25 years. As a result of population growth and broad economic development, more people will be willing, or able, to buy more and better food.

While the supply of food will increase in response to market demand – in other words, to buying power – there will still be millions who are unable to translate their nutritional needs into a commercial demand for food. These are the people who are left out of the global picture of supply and demand. The only way for poor people to be able to access adequate amounts of food in the long-term is to assist them in climbing out of poverty through investments in education, nutrition, agriculture and rural development. Food aid can play a vital role in meeting immediate food consumption needs of the hungry poor so they can take advantage of the longer-term opportunities offered by such development activities.

QUESTIONS FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. *What is the role of food import policies in terms of the threat of famine?*

Answer: Through structural adjustment programmes and membership in the WTO, most developing countries have adopted food import policies that are conducive to the importation of food through market mechanisms. Studies conducted by FAO and others suggest that many of the poorer developing countries, particularly in Africa, have undertaken substantial food market liberalization. In many African countries in particular, agricultural market liberalization may increase agricultural production and food supplies. However, it may also increase dependence on imported foods in situations where farmers have shifted from food crops to export crops, or where imported food is cheaper than that is domestically produced. This may leave a country vulnerable when faced with a decline in domestic food production and an income shock – which reduces the ability to import food. It is important for the poorest countries that both grant facilities (food aid) and other financial facilities (soft-loans) are available to ensure adequate food supplies.

2. *What is the role of government food distribution mechanisms in terms of the threat of famine?*

Answer: WFP recognizes that national governments have the primary responsibility to provide relief and assistance to the affected populations and, as necessary, to request, co-ordinate and make arrangements for the utilization of international assistance. Governments are expected to mobilize and use food stocks available in the country to initiate food relief operations where such are required. National security or reserve stocks should be used, where appropriate. Arrangements should be made to borrow commodities from other projects and organizations, where necessary, to ensure timely distribution before new food supplies arrive or to arrange commodity exchanges between different bodies where this can reduce the total food movements required and, therefore, economize on transport costs. Without the full cooperation of governments, WFP's effectiveness is limited.

3. What is the impact of theft and corruption on the threat of famine?

Answer: It is difficult for WFP to assess how much theft and corruption disrupt the agricultural economy and contribute to the possibility of famine in the current food crises in Africa. What is very clear and quantifiable is the impact of poor economic policies which are often tied to corruption. Clearly, in Malawi there is an issue of corruption in the role of national cereals stocks, but so far all indications are that the Government of Malawi is pursuing this case in good faith.

With regard to food aid itself, the overall impact on WFP operations of theft and corruption in terms of tonnage is very small. As an example, out of the total amount of food distributed through WFP's southern Africa emergency operation thus far in six countries (over 270,000 metric tons), less than 0.25% has been lost through theft (based on losses before final distribution). Country Office Teams, and in particular their monitoring units as well as non-governmental and other counterparts deploy significant efforts in order to ensure that this is the case.

In Zimbabwe, a limited number of illegal seizures of WFP food have taken place which were dealt with immediately. For example, when ruling party activists seized 3 metric tonnes of WFP food from a WFP partner's depot in the Insiza district, WFP suspended distributions in that district until the Government of Zimbabwe provided us with strong assurances that a similar event will not occur again.

As the food insecurity situation worsens in such countries, the cases of theft and corruption are likely to increase as well. In such circumstances, WFP remains committed to applying a strict no-tolerance policy and working closely with governments who have the prime responsibility to ensure that adequate legal frameworks and an appropriate security environment are provided to deal with such incidents and limit their frequency.

QUESTIONS FROM IRELAND

1. Regarding the level of support that has been given in terms of long-term development funding by the international community, the NEPAD paper makes a strong point that support by developed countries, including the multilateral institutions, has seriously diminished for agriculture over the past decade. This is a very serious factor in terms of tackling food insecurity, if that trend persists. So, is it possible to say what can be done by WFP to encourage donors to return to long-term agricultural support and development, particularly through your own programmes?

Answer: WFP, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), has advocated strongly for greater funding for agriculture and rural development. The three Rome-based agencies presented a joint paper to the March 2002 Financing for Development Conference in

Monterrey entitled "Reducing Poverty and Hunger: The Critical Role of Financing for Food, Agriculture and Rural Development." (Copies of the paper are available from the FAO and WFP missions in New York.) The three agencies promoted the ideas contained in the paper both in their plenary speeches at Monterrey and a well-attended joint side-event. We hope donors will recognize the critical need for greater support for agricultural and rural development in their own follow-up actions to the Monterrey conference. WFP's own development programmes are first and foremost determined by where we believe food aid has a comparative advantage in addressing the needs of the hungry poor. We have determined that food for education (primarily through school feeding); feeding programs for women and children at critical times in their lives; food for training that helps build human assets; and food for work that creates physical assets of lasting value to the poor, are areas where food aid can best contribute to long-term improvements of the hungry poor, most of whom live in rural agricultural areas.

2. On the question of globalization and protectionism, there have been some criticisms in some African countries that, as their economies have liberalized, this has not been met with a reciprocal response by the developed countries in terms of tariffs and protectionism in agriculture. And it has also meant, of course, that in some countries, for example Senegal or Tanzania, that there has been a diversion of food production for exports, given its greater value. This of course also in turn has implications for the local economy where promotion of exports can weaken the local base. It can also lead to weakness in prices of commodities which is another issue, albeit related.

Answer: The Executive Director made clear in his remarks to the Security Council that he agrees that trade reform that increases developing country access to developed countries markets is essential to reducing hunger and achieving long-term agricultural development and rural poverty reduction. The Programme's response to the other issues raised in this statement by Ireland is included in the earlier answer to the question from the United States.

3. Finally, to also ask in terms of the immediate crisis that WFP has been emphasizing in recent weeks, the planting of seeds for next year has been seriously affected by the current crisis. Is this something where in terms of support by the international community something can be done over the coming weeks and indeed of course by the WFP, or is the shortfall in seeds, fertilizers and hand tools, etc. a real difficulty in terms of planning for a reasonable crop, given the expected climate conditions next year?

Answer: FAO's $30 million appeal for emergency agricultural support in southern Africa has only been about 28% funded. Undoubtedly, this will have an impact on this year's harvest, as farmers do not have the inputs necessary to produce their crops (the situation is worse in some countries than others). Ironically, seed availability in the region is generally not too bad, but it is critical to note that poor households, however, simply cannot access them.

The international community should be encouraged to continue supporting programs of seed and inputs provision, and indeed agricultural development generally in the southern Africa region. Without sufficient amounts of seed available to poor farmers, the countries in the region cannot hope to recover from the shock of recent harvest failures and in some cases resume their previous status as net exporters of grain.

Even if the drought continues next year, some yield from the agricultural season can be expected, and efforts to maximize the harvest are more cost effective than buying and importing food. At the same time, such efforts support farmers' livelihoods. Over the long-term, programs that support crop diversification (including the planting of drought-resistant crops) also need to be developed further and supported so that the risk of a crop failures is minimized.

The current situation of seed availability across the region can be summarized as follows:

Lesotho – Some shortages are present. Note that season has now started in the highland areas so seed inputs now would focus on short-season crops, e.g. vegetables and pulses. Some frost damage exists, but that is mainly confined to highland areas.

Malawi – The UK and Norway supported two million seedpacks.

Mozambique – Enough local seed is available in country but around 60,000 farmers need emergency provision due to access problems.

Swaziland –Enough local seed available.

Zambia – Enough main-crop seed is available in the country but there are problems of local access and delivery. The situation is the same with fertiliser.

Zimbabwe – Enough seed is in country but there are access problems relating to the rate of inflation pushing up prices. FAO and NGO interventions are taking place for around 500,000 households, as well as Government loan schemes and some private industry efforts. Shortages of fertiliser exist due to transport and foreign exchange problems. There is likely to be reduced planting and production.

Source: SADC Regional Early Warning Unit (10 December 2002)

QUESTIONS FROM GUINEA

1. Within the famine alert campaign in Africa, we would like to find out whether the provision and management of food aid will take place on a national or regional level. What would be the most effective approach for Africa?

Answer: The World Food Programme has increasingly used a regional approach in crisis which strike specific regions. For example, WFP alerted the international community on the problems affecting the Horn of Africa in 1998 and Southern Africa in 2002 as the problems were of a regional nature and affecting millions of lives within a region. In addition to facilitating the allocation, delivery and distribution of resources to the most critical needs as the crisis unfolds, it also ensures that the beneficiaries in any one country are not unduly affected by temporary pipeline gaps which could lead to unrest and threats to peace and security. The West Africa region is already covered by a WFP regional emergency operation, covering the needs of the Mano River Union.

In the context of the famine alert campaign in Africa, WFP has been identifying needs on a national level, in close consultation with the governments and FAO, then, if appropriate, aggregating them at a regional level. WFP, in consultation with both recipient and donor governments, tries to assess the best resource mobilization strategy to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. The active participation and implication of affected governments in resource mobilization is a key to success in trying to meet the needs.

2. What could be the role played by civil society, particularly by women, in implementing the food aid policy within the context of this campaign (the Africa Hunger Campaign)?

Answer: WFP has launched the Africa Hunger Campaign as a global response to spontaneous assistance initiatives in North America, Europe and Asia. The policies adopted, national or sub-regional, within such a campaign will be crucial to addressing the problem of hunger in the region.

Civil society (CS) in general, and women in particular, could make a valuable contribution to complement government efforts in reducing hunger within the context of this campaign. The focus of CS in many countries is to close the economic and social gaps within society through campaigns for good governance, gender equality and equal access to national resources. CS could serve as partner in the development of national and/or regional food aid policies, in addition to being key stakeholders during implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of such policies.

WFP believes women should be at the center of every aspect of food assistance programs and has incorporated this commitment into its policies. We encourage CS institutions to play an important role in mobilizing local men's and women's participation in the policy preparation process at the national and local level. CS could also make valuable inputs into a well-researched policy through the provision of information during needs assessments, and the gender-sensitive identification of appropriate food assistance programmes (general food distribution, supplementary feeding programmes, food-for-work and food-for-training).

At the level of implementation, capable partners are required to register beneficiaries as well as carry out food distribution, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting on progress

of implementation. Women play a key role during this phase as members of teams responsible for identifying and registering those who need food assistance (beneficiaries), distributing food to those who need it, and controlling its use within the household.

As members of community-based organizations, women could be of particular importance, especially because they could ensure local government control and influence by participating in food-related decision making.

Logistics is another area where women could play a significant role as they are rarely recruited to ensure food delivery to beneficiaries and manage food at ports, extended delivery points and final distribution points with a view to improving storage practices and minimizing losses.

To conclude, CS and women have the potential to contribute significantly to any food aid policy identified to address the problem of famine in Africa. And for policies to be successfully implemented and goals met, CS and women in particular should be encouraged to participate in the efforts.

2. How do you think you can move from emergency food aid to real development for the affected people?

Answer: Achieving sustainable long-term development that reduces the need for emergency food aid is a complex process that requires a coordinated approach by national governments, many UN agencies, donors and national civil society. WFP recognizes that its food aid programs are only one part of this process, which explains why we are active participants in the established UN coordination bodies (particularly the IASC, UNDG, and ECHA) that seek to ensure a successful transition from relief to development. People need one of two things to move from relief to sustainable development –the assets necessary to produce for themselves the food they need, or income-generating opportunities that allow them to purchase sufficient food. WFP food-for-training, school feeding, and food-for-work activities can help people obtain assets they need to meet their own food needs. But much more is needed than what WFP alone can provide. The ingredients of sustainable development are well known – peace, good governance, and access for the poor to health, education, and income-generating opportunities. The question remains whether states are willing to commit the resources and political will necessary to put these ingredients into place.

QUESTION FROM THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

1. What policies are WFP following in the field of school feeding in Africa, so that children do not resort to illegal activities in order to achieve a livelihood? Are there awareness activities for children, particularly for little girls, in addition to providing them with necessary feeding?

Answer: There is little question but that education is a key deterrent to illegal activities undertaken for the purpose of earning a livelihood. An individual who has an education has more options for earning a living legally than an illiterate individual. The educated individual also has more knowledge of the consequences of illegal activities.

The World Food Programme's school feeding activities have focused primarily on providing food to enable poor children to attend school. The food is provided either in the form of in-school meals or as take-home rations. In addition to motivating children to attend school, nutritious in-school meals or snacks (such as high-energy biscuits) serve to reduce the children's hunger and increase their ability to concentrate and learn. Take-home rations serve as a reward for good attendance and as an economic incentive for families to offset the loss of the child's labor at home or in income-earning jobs. Take-home rations have been particularly effective for increasing girls' attendance and reducing drop-out rates.

In particularly difficult cases such as those involving orphans, child soldiers, and child laborers, we recommend a combination of both of these interventions--food in school to be sure that the child has at least one nutritious meal a day, and food for the family or foster family to help compensate the household for the child being in school rather than employed at home or elsewhere.

Because the food aid is not always enough to curtail illegal activities involving children that plague impoverished communities (such child labor, prostitution, theft, and child soldiering), and because girls are at special risk of being exploited, WFP has begun to work with its partners to identify and implement solutions. For example, WFP is working with UNICEF and UNESCO to discourage child labor and encourage education through the dissemination of appropriate public information messages and working with national and local governments to establish enforce relevant policies.

Girls who attend school may be at increased risk of sexual or other forms of harassment, abuse, or discrimination when en route to school or in school itself. To address this issue, WFP has called on its country offices, UNICEF and non-governmental organizations to identify where protection strategies have been used and to learn from those experiences. When effective interventions are identified, WFP will encourage other countries to implement similar actions.

QUESTION FROM THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

How, in addition, to providing humanitarian assistance by way of food, can WFP help resolve these key problems that Africa is facing? I understand that WFP alone cannot solve this problem, and that efforts of all international organizations and donors will have to be used. It is exceptionally important to coordinate international assistance, and I think a role here can be played by the Economic and Social Council, which was set up to provide this type of coordination.

Answer: WFP's mandate is food assistance, so its contributions to Africa's development will necessarily be through programs where food aid can make a difference. WFP has nonetheless tried to think of creative ways to use food aid to support African development, such as the proposed expansion of school feeding in Africa under NEPAD. WFP strongly agrees that a coordinated response from the different UN agencies and member states is critical to achieving results in addressing the issues facing Africa. We would support the Russian Federation's suggestion that ECOSOC could play a valuable role if it promoted more effective action by agencies and governments to support NEPAD, Africa's own partnership for development. It is important, however, to keep in mind that coordination is a means to an end, not an end in itself. The goal is helping poor and hungry people. Thus, the standard by which to judge the usefulness of every international coordination process is how much does it contribute to effective delivery of goods and services to the hungry poor, where they live.

QUESTION FROM BULGARIA

What type of cooperation exists between WFP and the joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, or UNAIDS?

Answer: WFP works closely with the UNAIDS co-sponsors in countries where HIV/AIDS activities are integrated into WFP activities. WFP and UNAIDS cooperation is particularly important in the current situation in southern Africa, where HIV/AIDS is a central contributing factor to the on-going food crisis. In many countries, WFP is an active participant in the Extended UNAIDS Theme Group on HIV/AIDS. Additionally, UNAIDS Country Teams, and in particular UNAIDS Country Programme Advisers, provide WFP with technical support on project formulation and partnership building at national level. Country Teams also assist WFP in advocating food security as a priority in National AIDS Strategies. Finally, WFP has consulted closely with UNAIDS in preparing a WFP policy paper on HIV/AIDS for consideration at the next WFP Executive Board meeting in February 2003.

QUESTION FROM CAMEROON

What can be done in order to reduce the heavy dependence in terms of resource contributions to WFP from a few to a large number of member states?

Answer: A strategic priority for WFP is to diversify its donor base. Through improved communication and resource mobilisation efforts, WFP hopes to retain and expand support from existing donors, develop relations with emerging donors, and explore possibilities for private sector contributions.